

city college news

A Bulletin For And By George Brown Employees

A guarantee of hope



A few of the 800 staff and students who participated in the two-day Change Forums.

The invitation to "Building Our Future: A Focus on Renewal" had a big red "guaranteed" sticker plastered across the cover, and the explanation outlined inside said: "We guarantee: • we will start and finish on time • you will have an opportunity to express your ideas and meet other staff • you will receive (by November 15) a record of the highlights of the day • you will be provided with lunch and refreshments."

A guarantee? What difference would a "guaranteed" sticker have on anyone's decision to attend this conference?

"Well," states Melissa Okorie, Registrar's Office, "they actually want to change and they're guaranteeing that they'll do something about it."

Those feelings, and others like it, were the central theme as the Forums geared up for the day. In casual conversation with staff members as they arrived, it was clear that, despite the guarantee, optimism was tempered with

skepticism (especially for those who had been here for some years).

Brian Bernie, a Professor in Liberal Arts for 29 years, said the guarantee might have made a difference to him. "It made me realize that management expects that we don't expect things to happen, and they're guaranteeing it will."

Did management do everything they expected? Did the day meet staff expectations? For Clare Bermingham, a support staff member with the Student Association, it did. "I expected dry workshops and got a really exciting day. It would have been nice to have more student participation, but I enjoyed it."

Paul Miskin, Coordinator/Professor in Interdisciplinary Studies, offers qualified agreement. "Our expectations were met in terms of what management said they would do, but not in the question and answer sessions where time seemed more important than communication."

For Darrin Caron, Director, Training Services, the day was slightly skewed by the makeup of their table, where there was limited faculty representation. However, he is quick to point out that "this was a good group, with lots of passion and a sense of fun. We quickly moved away from the negatives to a positive approach to the day."

Jerome Adamo, President, Student Association, was overwhelmed by the response of staff members to the two days. "It far exceeded my expectations. Through the work yesterday and today, it's clear that the faculty/staff/unions/students are committed to the mission and maintenance of the Change Project."

At the end of the day, it was easy to see that people were allowing themselves the luxury of hope. There was intense discussion at the tables, and many of the questions asked of the leadership centered on the next step in the process and the desire to maintain the momentum created over the past two days. "There has been lots of input, strategies and concerns voiced here," says Adamo. "I hope that these two days won't be in vain."

Caron has no doubts about the commitment to the next phase of the process, either from management or staff. However, he is concerned that with a committee for November 19 and 20 comprised mainly of volunteers, it should be balanced between faculty, support staff and administration and be representative of all campuses and experience levels. Adamo strongly concurs, adding that students' needs must be a strong consideration. "I take direction from a body of people, just as the unions do, and I need to ensure that the primary receivers of service (at this College) are involved in the process."

If there was an opportunity to participate in this kind of event again, would they do it? There was an emphatic 'yes' from everyone. Adamo adds, "We need to have check-ins with each other on a more regular basis."

Most George Brown staff are incurable optimists

I've always suspected as much, but confirmation of this unorthodox idea came in spades on October 28 and 29, when the vast majority of staff showed up at the Colony Hotel for the "Building our Future" events.

Although some may have come out of curiosity, or just to get away from the daily grind—and who could fault them for that—most people seemed to come with a sense of expectancy and hope. They came because they believed, at heart, that the unwieldy organization we belong to can change for the better. It can be reorganized to make staff happier in their jobs and to improve the education and services we offer the public.

The optimism expressed on those two days wasn't the gee whiz variety. Far from it. It often came as a gruff complaint or explosive frustration. But it was there, nevertheless, because people were there, participating, talking, and trying to accomplish something.

I call staff incurable optimists because most people's experience tells them George Brown as a corporate entity has been impervious to fundamental change. Many staff remember the Students First initiative, Planning for Performance Excellence project, and Program Review process of past years because of the vast amounts of staff time involved, the grand plans, the mass meetings and the urgency. They also remember how they fizzled, and then quietly disappeared.

Despite all that history, there we were again. Optimists. Shouting out ideas, using teams of flipchart paper, asking questions.

For two days the ballroom of the Colony Hotel was filled with intelligent, creative, and articulate people. People who were committed to making our college better. You could really sense the amount of goodwill and energy that could be put to work for positive change.

Can the Change Project harness that energy and will and channel it to good effect? I think it can. Can we, as staff, take ownership and pride in our College? Again, I think we can. But then again, I'm an incurable optimist.

Neil McGillivray, Editor

Thought-provoking Leadership

"It means not only taking part in the change process, but taking the change process to heart." —Frank Sorochinsky, President, George Brown College

They walked the halls in late September, hand-delivering the invitations to the two Forum days. It was no surprise, then, when they were out in force at the actual event, not only lending their support but offering an ear, participating at the tables, and responding to questions and concerns throughout the day. For the senior management of George Brown College, it was a necessary step in their desire to show commitment and passion for the change process that is unfolding.

As a way to formally cement their pledge to the program, "View from Leadership" was the second topic on the agenda for both days. Marilou Martin, President, OPSEU 557 (Support Staff) was the first to speak. With a reference to the book "Mission Possible," she outlined the need for staff to believe in the importance of the change and to decide for themselves whether to "...improve what is or create what isn't."

Tom Tomasi, President, OPSEU 556 (Faculty), was honest in his portrayal of the differences in staff perceptions but welcomed "...opposing views," stating that "...properly discussed, they foster change and growth."

There was a refreshing honesty to the words of Frank Sorochinsky, President of George Brown College. He openly acknowledged the cynicism that was prevalent in many of those with history at the College, and took responsibility for management's failure to respond, citing that whatever the reason,

"none...are satisfactory." His call to action, tempered with light touches of humor, was passionate and compelling. He compiled a list of issues that placed emphasis on "the quality of education, program development, human resource development, support and service excellence, partnerships and financial strength." He then underscored the need for changes in these areas by bluntly stating "...the harsh fact of life is that George Brown, at best, will ...become a place of last resort... place that is second rate and second fiddle... At worst, George Brown will cease to exist."

Sorochinsky ended by declaring that every staff member has a voice, an opportunity to be heard, and a responsibility to themselves and their coworkers and community, and that the vision for change will come about only through their participation and involvement.

In his speech that followed, Michael Cooke defined the role of the Change Project as "the College's mechanism for putting wheels under that vision." However, the success of the Project depends on "...determined and consistent follow-through on the decisions we make...on each of us getting involved...and staying involved."

Speeches are just that. Speeches. Words. No action. Recognizing that, the organizing committee started with an exercise for the participants followed by a Question & Answer session with George Brown's Senior Management Committee.

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Leadership, continued from page 2

Based on table discussions about what they heard and how they reacted, the groups decided on the issues they wanted addressed at the Forum. Response to this activity was interesting. The challenge seemed not whether people heard the message but whether or not they believed it. In a quick survey of the nine seated at one table, most were prepared to be hopeful but questioned whether change would occur quickly enough, and what systems were in place to ensure that things would be different this time.

Ayanna Baines, of Academic Bridging, wondered aloud: "If there were budget restraints before that stopped us from acting, how will we manage now?"

If skepticism reared its head to any extent during the day, it was during the ensuing interview period. Staff wanted surely that the resources would be available for change, that the things that made George Brown unique would continue, and that there would be clear and cooperative communication between all levels of staff to ensure that decisions reflected the views of everyone who wished to be heard.

Cooke responded by saying that "we clearly have to follow through. By having these two days, we've upped the ante and made concerns very very public."

Staff wanted assurance that change would occur at every level of the organization. As one participant said, "how willing is management to change? We need a whole new way for management to participate with us." There was one ironic twist to this exercise. With communication obviously a vital issue, the time allowed for the Question & Answer period was nowhere near long enough on either day. Patricia Sturino, Administrative Assistant, expressed her frustration. "It's challenging to try and get your view across in a limited amount of time. There are great questions here but they're not getting out there." Seeing the tension created by this situation, Frank Sorochinsky came up to the stage later in the day and asked anyone with questions to see someone on the Management Committee that day or to contact them with their questions when they returned to the College.

Given the seriousness of the issues presented, and the difficulty providing immediate answers to some of them, there was still a quiet air of optimism and shared commitment in the room at the end of the exercise. As Andrew Buntin, Professor, Child & Youth Worker, and a graduate of the program 25 years ago, explained, "as a new

Positively worn out

The challenge of working together

"Sad, Mad, Glad" is a good example of the collaborative approach used by the facilitators. It asked everyone at a table to agree on a simple definition of their table's topic (preassigned), to brainstorm and list the things that they were particularly mad, sad and glad about George Brown College, and to then assess the lists of their neighbouring tables and indicate, with a dot, where they strongly agreed. It was a simple and effective way to quickly discover the areas where staff members felt pride, embarrassment or frustration.

The reality of these two-day forums, though, is that there was an amazingly disparate collection of people seated at the tables in this conference room. From every campus, every department, every age group and every kind of experience, they had been brought together to find some mutual frame of reference on this topic of change.

For the most part, and where they had control, the organizers and facilitators had done a very thorough job of preparing people for this exercise. The conference package had rules for brainstorming and for the day. In their opening speeches, they emphasized the care needed in this kind of undertaking to discuss all ideas and accept them as valid; to listen to others and not dominate the conversation; to allow room for creativity and thought.

At many tables, trained table guides were on hand to assist when needed. And again, for the most part, it worked. On both Day 1 and 2, the table groups functioned well. Conversation flowed, ideas were applauded, and respect for others was felt. When this did not happen, the success of the day for these staff members was somewhat compromised. When ideas are humming, it becomes difficult to retain decorum, to understand that your thoughts might not be the best ones at your table, let alone in the room.

So what happened? First, some of the topics were intentionally vague. The organizers were clearly trying not to impose their own beliefs or feelings into the day, and sometimes allowed the group to determine the intent of a discussion. An admirable thought and one that carried out well for the majority of people. It did mean that there were great differences in defining words like "communication" or "service quality" in an organization with such diversity. At some tables, defining the word eventually became the central intent of the exercise, rather than the brief precursor to conversation.

Second, when a table lacked a strong facilitator, someone who could keep their peers on topic and eliminate—or at least soften—the effects of a dominant personality at the table, the exercise went nowhere... and fast. Staff members who had little prior experience with this kind of collaborative process and a tendency to go off-topic and on tangents could have been quickly focussed with an accomplished facilitator. Instead, results were skewed, table members resisted participating in the discussion, and time became an issue.

When the table worked, when there was a good mix of democratic personalities and an understanding of the intent of the exercise, there was a focus on the task at hand, good consensus among participants, strong flow of conversation, and a positive approach to the expected outcome.

Briefly: Common issues resulting from this exercise were—Glads: to be asked for input, caring for students, pride in work; Sads/Mads: low morale, unclean/outdated/ nonexistent furniture and equipment, underprepared students, lack of accountability, poor communication.

"GBC is important to me. I don't want to defend the college anymore."

Susan Sheehan, Business and Creative Arts



An outside view

By Kathy Rowlands, Writer, City College News Special Edition

It was interesting to watch people arrive for the two days of this Forum. The mood was cautious but optimistic. It was even more interesting to watch them as the day progressed and to see their mood and expectations change. Most interesting of all was to watch them as the day ended, tired but hopeful.

The beginning

First impressions: • the piano player, Bill Westcott, who reminded me of Jim Henson, and with his musical accompaniment to the day, lent the same air of whimsy and humor to the proceedings • the large numbers of helpers in white t-shirts, easily identifiable, very eager to help in any way possible, and always positive • the extremely organized registration area staff • the room setup, with the brightly-coloured folders at each setting, and the care taken to provide the tools for the day.

"I'm hopeful but cynical," exclaimed Susan Sheehan, a Professor for 28 years. "However, I'm here with an open mind and open heart."

Brian Bernie, a professor in Liberal Arts for 29 years, was browsing through his package as he sipped the coffee provided for everyone. "It's hard to make changes, but maybe this will help get rid of the culture of depression that emanates from the layoffs four years ago."



At another table, staff were noting the ambitious agenda for the day, and meeting people from other campuses that they had never seen. "I've heard comments about nothing ever changing. Positive things do come about but we tend to focus on the negative," said John Hardy, Director, Educational Resources, and an employee of the College for the past 24 years.

It starts

Kathleen Howard, the head facilitator for the day, began by setting the mood for the proceedings. She outlined the agenda for the day, reviewed the "rules" for good brainstorming, read the list of outcomes for the day, and applauded the staff for being there. "It takes a critical mass of people in an organization to effect change," she said. "And, there needs to be enough dissatisfaction to encourage change." Staff had been pre-assigned to their tables based on a mix of campus location, job title and years of experience.



The first exercise for the day, "Getting Connected," was a "get-to-know-you" session that expanded to include a discussion on common frustrations and dreamweaving. For staff who rarely get to meet, this was a very popular part of the day and laid the groundwork for the activities they would do during the day at their separate tables.

As Diane Abbey-Livingston, one of the facilitators for the event explained, "it's an opportunity to see the world through other people's eyes." More importantly, it became an opportunity to see how they shared a vision of the strengths of George Brown College, and the aggravations that needed change.

*"What should continue?
Caring, passion, spirit,
diversity, accessibility."*

Frank Sorochinsky, President

At Table 4 on Day 1, there was a round of head-nodding when Ruth, a Nursing Professor/Coordinator, stated that she had seen "too much erosion in the product quality of education."

Pamela, a professor in Interdisciplinary, received the same reaction to her comment that "I'm proud that we take students some other colleges do not."

And, on Day 2, Yasmin Walli, at Table 2, was met with agreement for her wish that: "we all work as a team without pointing fingers."

An effective method for generating discussion and focussing the day, there was some frustration in the end results. The table-sharing was well-received, but when the summarizing of results was shared with the room at large, there seemed to be a need for more structure.

"There was an honesty in the leadership speeches. They've taken ownership for the problems and the need to change."

Ann Marie Cornacchia, Student Affairs

As Susan Horne, Chair of Continuing Education for five years, explained: "it became a time to expand on personal irritations and pet peeves. We needed some framing for the comments."

The day continues

The next two exercises, "A View from Leadership" and, "The Challenge of Working Together," presented opportunities for management and staff to more clearly express their concerns for change, to more accurately define the areas they felt needed significant change, and to share those concerns with each other.

Perhaps one of the most compelling statements resulting from these exercises came on Day 2 when someone shouted: "we know we're better than the results of KPI!"

Gary Smith, a Professor in Building Renovations, thought these activities held particular merit. "It's informative to see that people think along the same lines; that what you thought was your own area's problem, isn't."

That said, the Question & Answer segments were frustrating on two fronts: there were those who felt they had gone on too long, but acknowledged that if everyone "has a

voice," then they need to be given time to do that; and those who felt that not enough time had been given, since there were so many questions that staff wanted management to immediately address.

Once the differences and concerns had been defined, it was time to think ahead, to create a vision of the George Brown College of the future. The facilitators decided that it was time to focus on images rather than words, and the markers and magazines came out. An astoundingly successful exercise, "GBC 2003" ultimately resulted in detailed action plans for features that the tables felt should be part of the long-range planning for the College.

The day draws to a close

"There's an energy in the room," exclaims Pam Doyle, of Community Services and Health Sciences, and there was. It was two days of tight timelines, creative thought, dreaming, collaboration and sharing, and yet there was a definite air of vitality present. Maybe due to the success of the days, the management team received well over the number of volunteers required for the next step in the process.

On November 19 and 20, everything that transpired will be brought forward for consideration and implementation. Some changes will occur immediately, others will be part of a long-term planning process.

Jerome Adamo, President, Student Association, reflected the thoughts of many as the end of the day drew near. "In five years, I want to visit George Brown College, remember this day and see the changes that have resulted."



Kathleen Howard

Kathleen Howard is a perfect facilitator for two reasons: she is unceasingly positive and upbeat, and she has enormous understanding of the problems inherent in change.

Coming from a background that includes work with organizations such as the United States Department of Transportation, NBTEL (New Brunswick), and Health and Community Services (Government), she knows that this is a challenging, frustrating, and empowering process.

Howard (her company is Kathleen Howard & Associates) had a good idea of the challenges she would face at George Brown College. "There were language triggers, history triggers, financial problems, and timing challenges because of the students," she listed.

Given that Howard's reputation is built on something called the "whole systems approach to change," none of this was unexpected or unwelcome. Change is effected through consideration of how systems work in relation to a particular problem, and often involve areas such as communications, marketing, logistics, technology and so on.

The situation at George Brown College is perfect for this approach. A collaborative process is essential to the success of this approach, but Howard cautions that "because everyone's involved does not negate senior management's responsibility." The approach does, however, give more input and power in the decision-making to all levels of the operation so that people are more apt to commit to the changes and solutions. It has been a demanding period of time for Howard, but her greatest joy, she admits, is "working with these (George Brown) people".

Informative A sense of urgency

Michael Cooke, Chair, Change Committee, has been part of the change process at George Brown since the spring of 1999, although he will probably tell you that every day sees some change if you desire to be successful.

A week before the two Forums, we asked him about the upcoming process and how he expected things to go.

CCN: It's very empowering for staff to be asked for their opinion about the way the College is being run. Skepticism occurs, however, when you find that your ideas weren't given credence, or acted upon. Please comment.

MC: Staff can likely cite lots of occasions when the College failed to ask their opinion or, as in the case of the 1997 Staff Survey, appeared not to act in response. Clearly, the success of the Change Project depends on visible, timely action that responds to the input people give. At the same time, staff need to take increasing responsibility for making change happen. "We" not "they" need to build the new GBC.

CCN: A brief look at the agenda for the two Forums shows that you are using a facilitator with quite a unique approach to change and empowerment. How and why did the Change committee decide on such a programme for these two days?

MC: The Management Committee chose this approach because 1) it is highly participatory and will likely provide the most wisdom in the shortest time, 2) it involves everybody at once and allows us all to make



"I hope that it's the beginning of a wave that will bring everybody along with it or drown those who don't want to come."

Franky Chernin, Student Affairs

a giant leap forward all at once in our attitudes about and our commitment to change, 3) the approach has been used successfully in a wide range of public and private sector settings in Canada and internationally, and 4) it fits the democratic and adult-education culture at GBC.

CCN: Why a "guarantee"?

MC: Time is our most precious resource. Too often we waste each other's time in meetings that lack focus or are poorly executed. The guarantee demonstrates that we respect the contribution of people's time and intend to make the best possible use of it.

CCN: What do you see as the greatest challenge following this event?

MC: Visible action that results in real change.



CCN: The words "roadmap for change" come up often when discussing the next steps in this change process. Who will be providing the "directions" for this roadmap? How will this "trip" be financially supported?

MC: On November 19-20, 90 volunteers from the Oct 28-29 Forums will spend two days shaping an action plan. This will be forwarded to the Implementation Committee (about 10 people from across the College) who will work with all concerned parties to implement the plan and to monitor progress. As well, the Management Committee and the Presidents' Group (the College and Union presidents) will monitor progress on a monthly basis. There are some resources in the 1999-2000 budget to support the process. The 2000-2001 budget will have to include additional resources to continue the work.

CCN: Is there any real sense of urgency for these changes? If so, why?

MC: I'm pleased by the fact that close to 800 staff have chosen to attend the Oct 28-29 forums. This indicates a certain level of concern among the college community. However, I think that too few of us fully understand the consequences of failure. If we don't change quickly, if we don't become the college of choice in our areas of expertise, then I think we will likely disappear within ten years. I also think that too many of us think that "they" need to change, but "I" don't need to change.

CCN: What do you see as a successful outcome to these two days?

MC: For me, it will be a success if most participants go home excited about who we are and what we can become, stimulated by the vision our leaders share with us, more confident that the college is prepared to make major changes, and ready to make changes in their area and in their own performance.

CCN: What is your own personal wish for GBC 2003?

MC: I want George Brown to be the college of choice in our areas of expertise. I want to be a proud employee of this college. Proud because I know we offer top quality programs and we treat students with the best possible care.

"I'm hopeful. I'd like it to happen, and part of our mandate is to make sure it happens."

Drew Sauveur, Student Association

Enthusiasm A picture of GBC

"A Picture of GBC... When it is a Better Place to Learn and Work" became not only a method for getting beyond differences in language but perhaps the most successful exercise of the two days.

It is hard to say what drove this success. Perhaps it was the childlike delight people felt in ripping photos out of magazines, gluing, writing big bold words in marker across a sheet of paper, and hunkering down on the floor with their tablemates to decide on the designs for their poster. Maybe it was that there are groups of people who are more visually oriented, who felt a great release in not having to form their ideas into coherent words and phrases.

Perhaps it was the release from intellectual thought to a more visceral one, where an image on a page shouted out more strongly than any colleague could. Whatever it was, it worked. The energy in the room was electric. There was an astonishing mood of optimism, enthusiasm and hope from every table. This was an exercise that empowered everyone, that allowed freedom of expression and a chance to bond in a collective display of the day's activities.

For Debbie Cornwall, of Community Services, it was "creative problem-solving" at its best. "It encourages me to really think about what I want for George Brown," she explained as she glued her photo to Table 28's poster.

Heather Urquhart, in Nursing for 17 years, stated that: "there was a sense of 'why are we here?' when the day first started," but as they worked on their GBC 2003 pieces, "people felt more hopeful."

In an interview with Kathleen Howard, the facilitator of the Forums for Change, she indicated that a primary challenge in planning for the day was to "get below the language." As she explains, in an organization of such disparity, words can become barriers to understanding and growth. Even those with a talent for language take issue when the words, for them, define an opposing direction or intent ("client" versus "student" is a contentious issue at the moment).

A quick five-minute snapshot of this activity on Day 2 illustrates how the dynamics of each table stayed intact and yet the creative surge was clearly felt.

Table 30: Everyone was standing up by the easel, choosing what they wanted to place and where.

Table 35: One person was very creatively arranging pieces brought to him by the others at his table. There was a careful connection between the text from the magazines and the photos/drawings they had chosen (i.e. a smile drawn in marker had the words "Is it in you?" pasted across the bottom).

Table 20: Poster paper clearly in the middle of the table instead of on the easel so that everyone could suggest pieces and places at the same time.

Table 13: Done. The secret to their success? "We didn't confer."

Table 2: Everyone down on the floor, clustered around their poster, choosing photos/stickers that had been cut out by everyone. A pair of scissors that had been broken in the process were placed center-stage, with the words: "Need tools that work to do the job" on a sticky-note beside it.

Table 18: Paper in the middle of the table, and everyone sitting at their seats around it, discussing each photo in turn before putting in



place. (They clapped upon completion of the project.)

Michael Cooke, Chair, Change Committee, was inspired by the mood in the room as he walked around looking at the groups in action. "The energy is high and the participation is as good as it gets. There's a contract being created among us that says we're going to change."

When the tables were done, the work was placed around the room as a "photo gallery" and again, participants were asked to choose the features they most agreed with.

Table 2, with great processional fervour, walked their piece over to the wall space assigned to them, making sure that they were involved right up until the tape was placed on the wall. They then stood back and assessed it before adding several more stickie-notes and declaring it done.

Yasmin Walli, Administrative Assistant, Communications and Marketing, explained their mood. "We worked as a team, we put out a good product, and we're proud of it!"

Briefly: Each group chose three features they wished to put forward for further action, and developed a detailed action plan for the feature they cared most. All results from this activity will go to the meeting on November 19/20 for consideration. Some examples: better service to students, adequate tools to do the job, showing that people matter.



A PASSION FOR CHANGE

Final Report

"Building Our Future: A Focus On Renewal" Forums
Toronto Colony Hotel
October 28-29, 1999

Introduction

Close to 800 George Brown College staff came together at the Colony Hotel on October 28th and 29th to participate in "Building Our Future" forums. These two days provided all college staff with a unique opportunity to meet colleagues from across the college and to share their work, their frustrations and their dreams for the college's future.

The participants demonstrated a passionate commitment to students and to working together to meet their needs. They spoke forcefully about their frustration with systems failures, inadequate resources and the barriers created by working in silos. Participants also discovered significant differences in their perspectives and their work. These related to diversity, location in the college, types of work, length of service, language and differing relationships with college management.

The word "renewal" is an anagram for "we learn" as one participant noted. Indeed, the forums created a learning space where GBC staff discovered a great deal about who they are and what they hold in common.

The complete record of these events will be published in a binder (100+ pages) entitled *Building Our Future Proceedings*. The binder will be available on request after November 10, 1999. This "Final Report" contains a brief summary of the intensive discussions and teamwork that took place over the two days.

The View From Leadership

OPSEU Presidents Marilou Martin (Local 557) and Tom Tomassi (Local 556) made opening statements in which they endorsed the urgent need for change. They urged participants to set aside their skepticism and to participate actively in the change process announced by the college.

In his address, GBC President Frank Sorochinsky made a call for dramatic improvements in learning results, the learning environment and the standards of service for students and staff. Reaching this goal will not be easy, he pointed out, because of widespread cynicism that the change process will not be supported. He acknowledged past mistakes: "At times we didn't listen. At times we didn't understand. At times we were preoccupied or stressed. At times we did change but failed to communicate. At times we didn't execute."

The President named six ingredients essential to the college's future success: programs that prepare students for work and society, excellent service, quality superior to the college's competitors, effective use of technology, strategies to cope with stress, and genuine leadership from every staff member.

All three leaders warned that, without change, the very future of the college is at risk. They called on participants to embrace change wholeheartedly, to seek creative new ways of working and to hold each other accountable for the results.

The View from Employees

Participants generated a comprehensive list of their concerns through an exercise entitled "Glads, Mads and Sads". The following list highlights the most popular entries.

Gladdest Glads

- We've finally been asked for our opinion.
- We work with great people who really care about our students.
- Everyone is finally involved.
- Leadership is listening and is committed to change.
- Our students say thanks.
- There are high employment rates for our grads.
- We are developing alternative forms of program delivery.
- Leadership is not limited to management.
- There is a commitment to improve communications.

Saddest Sads

- The history of layoffs and cutbacks has created a hostile environment.
- People feel cynical.
- Changes are announced at the last minute and the impact has not been fully considered.
- People's efforts aren't recognized or rewarded.
- We have to apologize to students all the time.
- Service and academic departments don't communicate well with each other.
- Support staff and teaching staff not treated the same.
- There is not enough staff training.
- Students are treated as a commodity.

Maddest Mads

- People who work hard just get more work assigned.
- There are too many temporary employees.
- Class sizes are too big.
- Management has no clear answers about registration and timetable problems.
- There isn't appropriate screening to place students properly.
- There is a lack of services and equipment to make GBC accessible for Deaf students and staff.
- Student retention is more important than standards; money is the bottom line.
- People are not held accountable.
- Students are constantly given the "run-around".
- There is a lack of input from those who have to live with the decisions.
- Facilities are dirty and equipment is broken or out-of-date.
- Students treat the facilities like a garbage pail.
- People who say, "That's not my job."

George Brown College in the Year 2003

In the afternoon sessions, table groups created giant collages to describe their visions of the college in the year 2003. Each collage depicted specific features of a renewed GBC. Half of the collages focused on a student perspective and the other half, on a staff perspective. Key features in each category included the following list. (The numbers in brackets indicate the number of table groups that identified the particular feature)

From A Student Perspective

- (20) Resources: cutting-edge resources/corporate partners/more government funding/improved technology/lots of light and good air/no language barriers/renewed campuses/staff resources at pre-1996 levels
- (19) Promoting Learning and Achievement: holistic learning/ a wide range of programs/no large classes/ standards of excellence/quality is not sacrificed/support staff in sufficient numbers
- (18) Student / Teacher Relationship: demonstrated caring/ student centered/ ability to accommodate students' needs/student satisfaction/service excellence/partnerships/
- (13) Quality Education: high student success/students flocking to the college/Best College Award/GBC sets the educational standard/on-going evaluation/ high standards of excellence in academic programs
- (13) Caring: listening and student recognition/people matter/students not sent in circles/ attend to the whole person in education/concern for student success
- (11) Diversity: college serves multi-faceted community/the global college/diversity of staff and students - racial, gender, economic, age, ability/more day-care spaces for students' children
- (9) Leadership: humour /active involvement/synchronized communication/time management/ listening and responsive/promises are kept/not just talk but action

From A Staff Perspective

- (15) Excellence: a leader a leader in the college system/ set the standard/a place of vision and focus/ not bound by conventions/highest quality in our programs and service delivery service
- (14) Morale: inspired faculty/fun...with purpose/smile / laugh more/ career fulfillment/rewards for performance/recognition/opportunity and support for staff to take risk/well-paid
- (14) Positive Student-Teacher Relationship: smaller classes/improved screening/ dynamic teaching/ commitment to professional development and success/everyone wants to come here
- (14) Teamwork: anything is possible working together/ many hands get the job done
- (11) High Tech Classrooms: getting plugged in /new facilities, support, technology/excellent reputation in community/excellent information systems/updating facilities and technology
- (10) Support: caring for people/open mindedness/ shared decision-making and accountability/dependable leadership you can respect/staff recognition/management really listening/good communication
- (10) Tools to do the Job: tons of support staff/workload is sustainable over an entire career/adequate tools
- (9) Empowerment: the power to act and make decisions/strength/ self-management

Action Plans and Next Steps

Participants generated several hundred pages of flip chart notes outlining what the college must start, stop and continue doing in order to realize the vision articulated in the previous section. These pages have been synthesized to a hundred pages of work sheets that will be forwarded to the Action Planning Days on November 19-20, 1999.

Over 150 participants volunteered to participate in the Action Planning Days. Of these, a cross-section of 100 staff members representing all areas and perspectives of the college will be invited to these two days. Together, this team will integrate the input of the October forums, categorize and prioritize actions, and develop concrete action plans that will be given to the proposed Implementation Committee. The Implementation Committee will begin its work in December 1999.

Within the Management Committee, Michael Cooke is charged with coordinating the *Change Project*. He will work with all concerned groups in the college community to ensure that an intensive follow-up program is engaged and that progress reports are issued regularly. Michael assured participants that the follow-up program would include a clearly stated timetable and mechanisms to measure results.

Conclusion

The stated outcomes of the forums were that each participant would: (1) feel valued and heard, (2) have a better understanding of the *Change Project*, (3) be able to weigh Management's commitment, (4) have input into an action plan, and (5) know the next steps and who will be involved.

The evaluations confirmed overwhelmingly that the objectives were met. The forums provided an enormous and much-welcomed boost for change in the college. Participants clearly indicated a strong willingness to provide leadership and energy for the work ahead. In his closing remarks to the forums, Frank Sorochinsky challenged each participant to begin the change process immediately by doing one thing differently in the week ahead and by paying tribute to a change action carried out by a colleague.

The forums produced a remarkable amount of catalytic energy for the *Change Project*. The college's ability to take full advantage of that energy will depend ultimately on strong leadership, college-wide involvement, visible and consistent follow-through, collaborative labour relations and excellent communications.

In short, the success of the change process will depend on passion for change, sustained and nurtured by everyone.

(Additional copies of this report are available from Rachelle Maciel, Office of the Dean, Faculty of Health Sciences and Community Services, St. James Campus-Room 483F; Tel: 415-2474.)

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editor: Neil McGillivray
writer: Kathleen Rowlands
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